

**STAFF REPORT:** 9/13/2023 MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

**APPLICATION NUMBER:** HDC2023-00054

**ADDRESS:** 400 FISKE

**HISTORIC DISTRICT:** BERRY SUBDIVISION

**APPLICANT:** DERRICK GILFORD (JCA ENTERPRISES)

**OWNER:** WADE DAVIS

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION:** 9/18/2023

**DATE OF STAFF VISIT:** 9/28/2023

**SCOPE OF WORK:** REPLACE SLATE ROOF WITH ASPHALT SHINGLES (WORK PARTIALLY COMPLETE)

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Erected ca. 1925, the building at 400 Fiske is a two-story, single-family dwelling that is located within the Berry Subdivision Historic District. The Tudor Revival-style home displays a cross-gabled roof with a front-gabled, projecting roof at the front façade. A two-story wing with a mansard type roof is located at the building's rear. Much of the side-gabled portion of the roof displays newly installed brown asphalt shingles while the rear portion of the gabled roof retains its original slate roof. Shed roof dormers with slate shingle clad side and front walls top the roof. Exterior walls are clad with stucco and brick. Wood half-timber detailing is located at the building's second story. Windows are the historic-age wood double hung and casement units. An historic-age, detached garage which sits to the rear of the parcel displays a brick exterior cladding and a hipped slate roof.



**400 Fiske, current appearance of front facade. Staff photo taken 9/28/2023**



**400 Fiske, current appearance of rear wall/roof. Staff photo taken 9/8/2023. Note that a new rubberized roof membrane is proposed for installation at the flat portion of the mansard roof at this location.**



**400 Fiske, current appearance. Staff photo taken 9/8/2023**

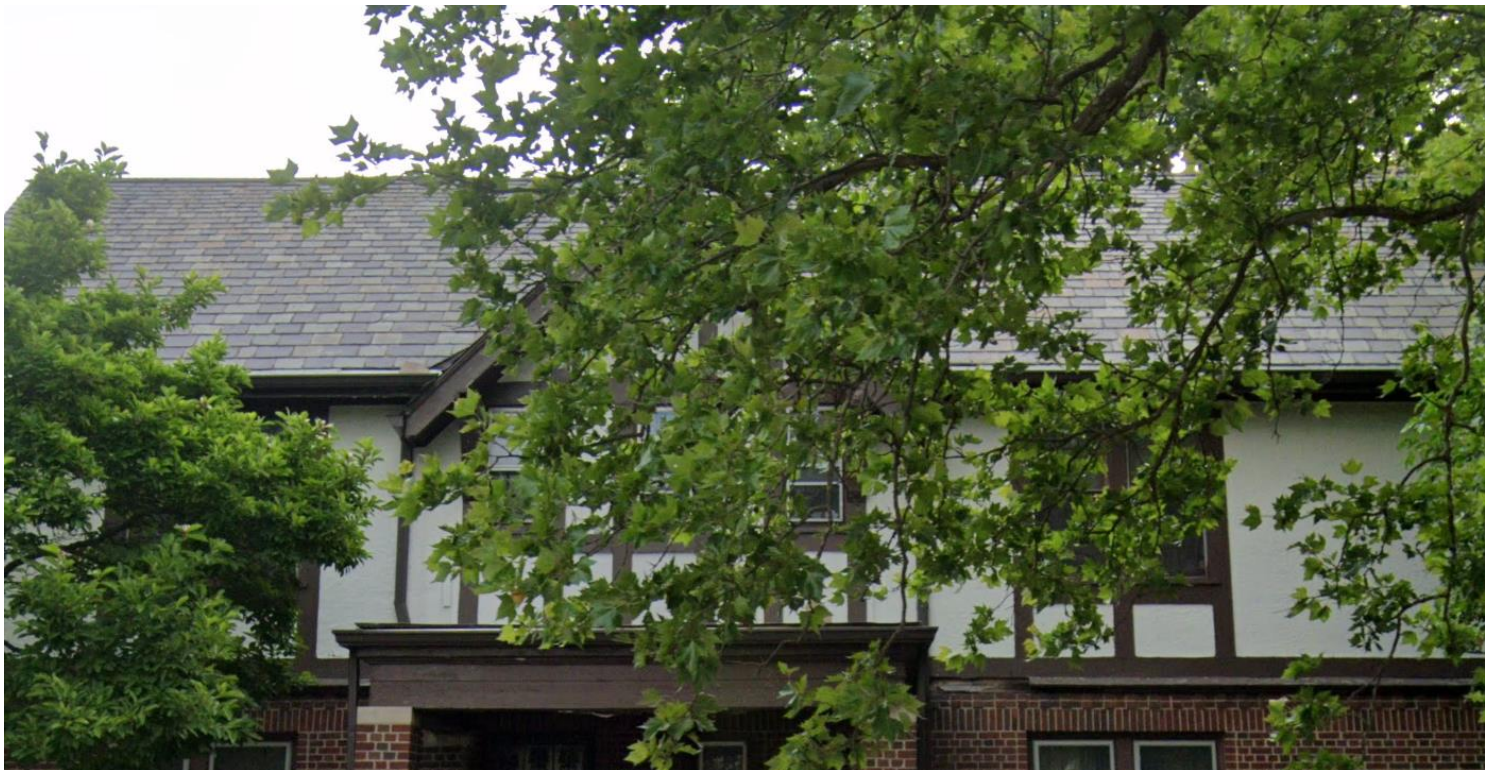
**PROPOSAL**

With the current submission, the applicant is seeking the Commission’s approval to replace the home’s slate shingles with new asphalt shingles (color, brown). The application also proposes to repair damaged areas of the rear flat/mansard roof with the addition of new torch down rubberized roofing. Staff visited

the site on 9/28/2023 and noted that much of the slate has been removed from the front, side-gabled portion of the roof. This work was undertaken without HDC approval and/or permit.

### **STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH**

- On 9/8/2023, HDC staff was notified that the slate roof at 400 Fiske was in the process of being removed. Staff consulted files maintained by the HDC and the Detroit Building Safety Engineering and Environmental Department (BSEED) and found that the HDC has not issued a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work and a permit had not been pulled. Staff therefore visited the site that day and informed the contractor of their requirement to acquire HDC approval and permit for the work.
- As noted above, staff did conduct a second visit to the site on 9/28/2023 and found that the slate had been removed from much of the front, side-gabled portion of the roof. The portion of the rear, gabled roof (when viewed from the public right-of-way) and the shed-roof dormers appeared to retain their historic slate tiles. Staff was unable to view the home from the rear yard during her 9/28/2023 field visit to understand the current conditions at this area of the roof.
- Staff did view the designation photo of the home, the remaining portions of the slate on the property's roof, and recent Google Streetview images which were taken prior to the current unapproved roof removal. It is staff's opinion that the slate roof was a distinctive, character-defining feature of the home. A review of the below Google Streetview images, which date from 2022, indicated that the slate tiles generally appeared to be in repairable condition at that time. It does not appear that any of the tiles have dislodged, slid out of place, nor do they appear to be delaminated or cracked.





Google Streetview images, 2022

- The current scope of work calls for the addition of a new rubberized roof membrane on the flat portion of the rear mansard roof. Staff supports approval of this portion of the project

## ISSUES

- As noted above, it is staff's opinion that the slate roof proposed for removal/replacement is a distinctive, character-defining feature of the building
- During the initial 9/8/2023 site visit, staff observed the condition of slate tiles which had been removed from the roof and dropped to the ground. Staff noted that the slate roof tiles did vary in size and that many appeared to have been in good condition. See below photos taken during the 9/8/2023 field visit.
- Note that the applicant did not provide a narrative description/condition assessment of the roof prior to the unapproved work or currently, nor did he provide photo documentation which outlined the slate roof's level of deterioration outside of one photo indicating an area where a small number of individual tiles were missing and a photo of the roof taken from the front lawn (see below). Also, a quote for in-kind repair of the slate roof was not included with the current submission. Staff did request that the applicant provide this information. However, staff has yet to receive the requested information as of the date of this report's completion. Therefore, staff has relied on Google Streetview images of the home from 2022, the above-referenced 9/8/2023 staff assessment of the slate tiles which had been removed from the roof, and a 9/28/20023 field assessment of the remaining slate tiles from the public right of way (see attached photos) and concluded that the slate roof does/did not appear to be deteriorated beyond repair. Per the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Standards, Standard # 6 "Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced." It is staff's opinion that the work does not meet SOI Standard #6 because it is not clear that the slate roof is deteriorated beyond repair.



Photos of the roof submitted by applicant

- SOI Standard #6 states that “where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials.” Therefore, if the Commission agrees with the applicant that the slate tile roof was deteriorated “beyond repair” and agrees with staff that it is a distinctive, character-defining feature of the home, then per this Standard the new roof must match the original. Staff does recognize that a new slate roof might be financially infeasible and therefore a dimensional asphalt shingle roof might present an appropriate replacement product. However, the color of the shingles should reflect that of the home’s slate roof. RE: the current case, the new asphalt shingles which have been installed are brown and more closely resemble a wood shake roof vs a slate roof and are therefore not in keeping with the SOI standards and/or the home’s historic character.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### Recommendation # 1 - Section 21-2-73, DENIAL

It is staff’s opinion that the proposed removal of slate from the home’s roof project does not meet the Elements of Design for the neighborhood and the SOI Standards for Rehabilitation for the following reasons:

- The existing slate roof is a distinctive character-defining feature of the home
- The current application does not provide sufficient documentation that the slate roof is deteriorated beyond repair
- The current brown asphalt shingle roofing which has been installed without HDC approval and/or permit does not provide an adequate replication of the home’s historic slate roof

Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Denial of the proposed slate roof replacement because it does not meet the Berry Subdivision Historic District’s Elements of Design or the SOI Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically, Standards #:

- 2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
- 5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*
- 6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

### Recommendation # 2 - Section 21-2-73, CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

It is staff’s opinion that the proposal to install a new rubberized roof membrane at the flat portion of the rear mansard roof conforms to the district’s Elements of Design and meets the SOI standards. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission approve this scope item with the condition that the existing slate at the rear mansard roof be retained.

Staff photos, taken on 9/8/2023 during unapproved slate roof removal









